

Chapter 1. Introduction



Background

Located in the mountainous north coast region of California (figure 1-1), the Headwaters Forest was acquired by the Secretary of Interior and the State of California on March 1, 1999, to preserve the last unprotected large stand of old-growth redwood forest. Unique ecological values of the forest include

- a highly intact, functioning old-growth forest ecosystem that has very large old-growth redwood and Douglas-fir trees,
- a high diversity of plant species in the forest understory,
- nesting of threatened marbled murrelets and spotted owls, and
- undisturbed headwater stream habitat for threatened coho and chinook salmon and steelhead trout.

The federal legislation authorizing acquisition of the forest

- established a specific boundary and point of access,
- called for joint federal-state acquisition, with management by the federal government and an easement to guarantee conservation management granted to the state, and
- established the requirement for the development of a management plan.

The specific 7,472-acre tract acquired includes 3,088 acres of unharvested redwood groves surrounded by 4,384 acres of previously harvested forest and brushlands. The U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is charged with management of the Headwaters Forest Reserve (Reserve), and the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) represents the state's interests in Reserve management.

Purpose of and Need for Management Plan (Project Objective)

The federal legislation authorizing the Reserve (1998 Interior Appropriations Bill) directed the Secretary of Interior to prepare a long-term management plan for its management. It established the following management goal for the plan:

“conserve and study the land, fish, wildlife, and forests occurring on such land, while providing public recreation opportunities and other management needs.”

This document is the required management plan. It has been jointly developed by BLM and DFG to provide direction for future management actions.

The need for the plan is to assure that human activities are compatible with the ecological integrity and preservation of the Reserve’s lands, fish, wildlife, and forest. As required by the authorizing legislation (see chapter 2), the plan addresses requirements for species management, the conduct of research and monitoring activities, public access, provision of minimal facilities, and a management budget (chapter 4). In particular, it addresses watershed and forest restoration actions that are needed to protect and promote long-term ecological integrity and provide conservation management.

Planning Period and Plan Revision

This plan is intended to provide the basis for sound management of the Reserve for at least the next 10–15 years. Management must be adaptive, and stewardship of the Reserve will occur in the context of natural succession of forest characteristics and fish and wildlife use. The managing agencies recognize that the plan must be able to adapt to changing circumstances, such as new scientific information, new environmental laws, changing public demands, new management opportunities, or an addition to the Reserve (not foreseen at this time). For this reason, plan monitoring and evaluation schedules will be established as plan-implementation actions to ensure that the effects of planning decisions are tracked and reviewed on a regular basis. Evaluations will determine whether specific planning decisions remain valid or need to be revised.

A *plan amendment* normally involves changing or adding management decisions that do not change the fundamental character of the overall plan or any of its major elements. A *plan revision* is made in response to significant new information or issues that warrant a major change in the management direction of the plan or one of its major elements. BLM planning guidelines specify that plan revisions may be considered in the following instances:

- in response to an evaluation of consistency with new laws, regulations, and policies;
- upon determination that implementing the plan’s decisions is not achieving the desired outcomes or meeting the plan’s goals;
- when new science, data, or other information indicate a need to change decisions;
- upon determination that the plan no longer provides adequate management direction; or
- when new proposals or actions not evaluated in the plan are put forth.

Both plan amendments and plan revisions require compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

NEPA/CEQA Provisions

General

NEPA and CEQA require that agencies proposing to plan or implement actions that may alter the environment evaluate potential environmental effects of such action and disclose them to decision makers and the public. If an action may result in significant adverse effects, the agency must identify feasible alternatives or planning/mitigation measures that can avoid or substantially lessen the identified impact.

This document is a joint resource management plan, environmental impact statement (EIS), and environmental impact report (EIR) that is required by NEPA and CEQA because significant adverse environmental effects could result from implementation of some land-use alternatives. This document both presents management goals and direction for long-term Reserve management and defines and evaluates alternative management approaches for specific issues identified in a public scoping process (chapter 2). The foreseeable effects of each management alternative (chapter 5) are identified and compared (chapter 6).

This document is the draft version of the resource management plan/EIS/EIR, made available for public review and comment. As required by NEPA and CEQA, comments on this draft document will be reviewed, and the document will be modified accordingly. Once a final document is prepared and statutory appeal periods have transpired, the management plan will be formally adopted and implementation will begin.

Programmatic Aspects

This document addresses future management actions at a land-use planning and program level and indicates the extent and magnitude of several types of actions, such as watershed restoration, forest restoration, and development of recreation facilities, including a trail system. Implementation of these programs will entail several years. Individual projects will be formulated, designed in detail, reviewed for potential environmental effects, modified as warranted, and implemented. Any environmental documents that must be prepared for future projects will be tiered to this document. This document provides an assessment of project effects that are generally expected to occur with program implementation, but further site-specific analysis will be conducted as necessary.

Impact Baseline and No-Action Alternative: Interim Management

The baseline for assessing benefits and impacts in this document is the current condition of the Reserve under interim management policies established by BLM in March 1999 (Federal Register 1999). Future continuation of this baseline is one of the management alternatives considered for each of the various programs governed by this plan.

Process and Required Approvals to Achieve Final Plan and Final EIS/EIR

This document is being made available for a 90-day public review period. At the close of this period, all submitted comments will be evaluated and revisions to the draft plan will be considered. Revisions that improve the ability of BLM to meet the established management goals will be adopted, and a final resource management plan and final EIS/EIR will be prepared. After allowance for final review of the plan/EIS/EIR, BLM will issue a record of decision for plan adoption and implementation, and DFG will issue a notice of determination to jointly adopt the plan.

Concurrent to this process, BLM will formally consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to obtain opinions about whether implementation of the plan is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the several listed threatened and endangered species. This process may result in the agencies' determination that elements of the draft plan should be modified to minimize an adverse effect. Such modifications to the plan will be made to the plan before it is finalized for adoption.

Organization of This Document

This plan/EIS/EIR is composed of the following sections.

- Chapter 2, "Planning Framework," describes the legal and regulatory framework within which the plan must be formulated, as well as planning issues identified during public scoping, and planning criteria (extent of analysis, range of alternatives, and planning assumptions).
- Chapter 3, "Affected Environment (Environmental Setting) and Interim Management of the Reserve," is an analysis of current environmental conditions and the current management situation.
- Chapter 4, "Management Goals and Direction," discusses the management goals and management policy for the several program areas addressed by the plan:
 - ❑ species management,
 - ❑ watershed and forest restoration,
 - ❑ research management,
 - ❑ fire management,
 - ❑ recreation access management,
 - ❑ cultural resource management,
 - ❑ special areas designation and management,
 - ❑ resource monitoring and evaluation, and
 - ❑ management revenue.
- Chapter 5, "Management Alternatives," is a set of 10 management issues and several alternatives for resolving each of them. The management agencies' preferred alternatives are identified, as well as the alternatives for continuing the interim management policies.

- Chapter 6, “Environmental Consequences (Environmental Effects and Alternative Comparisons),” is an analysis of the effects, both beneficial and adverse, of implementation of the management goals and direction for each of the identified alternatives.
- Chapter 7, “References Cited,” includes a complete bibliography of documents cited.

Following these main sections are several appendices that support analyses and conclusions of the planning process, as well as a list of preparers, individuals and organizations receiving notice of this document, and an index.